November 13, 2009

just the
FACTs

This fact sheet is provided as a reference to encourage a greater understanding of the various issues related to managing water in south Florida.

Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule Promotes Water Conservation in South Florida

The South Florida Water Management District is promoting water conservation for its many benefits in meeting the growing demands on South Florida's limited water supply. Measures in the District's Comprehensive Water Conservation Program, including a Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule, are designed to accomplish a measurable change in water use and develop a lasting water conservation ethic. The rule was developed with input from water users across the region after more than two years and 30 public workshops, including several meetings of the District's Water Resources Advisory Commission work group.

Approved by the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board, the Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule sets a two-day-a-week landscape watering schedule throughout the District, with a three-day-a-week provision for local governments in counties south of Lake Okeechobee. It is anticipated that these landscape conservation measures will reduce potable water demand by 5 to 10 percent.

2-Day-A-Week Watering

Charlotte, Highlands, Okeechobee, Orange, Osceola and Polk Counties

The Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule will limit lawn and landscape irrigation to two days per week. The rule will apply when the source of water for irrigation is a utility, lake, pond, canal or well.

- Residents and businesses with an **odd-numbered** street address could water lawns and landscapes on **Wednesdays** and/or **Saturdays,** only **before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m**.
- Residents and businesses with an **even-numbered** street address, **no street address** or those that **irrigate both even and odd addresses** within the same zones, including multi-family units and homeowners associations, could water lawns and landscapes on **Thursdays** and/or **Sundays,** only **before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m**.
- No restrictions on irrigation using reclaimed water or harvested rainwater.

3-Day-A-Week Watering

Option for Broward, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Palm Beach and St. Lucie Counties

A three-day-a-week watering provision is available to counties located wholly within District boundaries. Similarly, the rule will apply when the source of water for irrigation is a utility, lake, pond, canal or well.

- Residents and businesses with an **odd-numbered** street address could water lawns and landscapes on **Mondays, Wednesdays** and/or **Saturdays,** only **before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m**.

sfwmd.gov
South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, Florida 33406
561-686-8800 FL WATS 1-800-432-2045
www.sfwmd.gov
MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 24680
West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680

- Residents and businesses with an **even-numbered** street address, **no street address** or those that **irrigate both even and odd addresses** within the same zones, including multi-family units and homeowners associations, could water lawns and landscapes on **Tuesdays, Thursdays** and/or **Sundays,** only **before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m**.
- No restrictions on irrigation using reclaimed water or harvested rainwater.

The rule will allow additional watering for up to 90 days following the installation of new lawns and landscaping. The use of low-volume irrigation methods, including micro-irrigation, container watering and hand-watering with a hose and automatic shut-off nozzle, is also allowed anytime.

Water Conservation Makes Good Sense

South Florida's unique environment and economy depend on the continued availability of regional water resources. Water conservation, including reductions in the amount of water used for irrigation, protects our water supply and assures there will be water available for the environment and our communities in the future. Consider that:

- According to current Bureau of Economic and Business Research projections, four million new residents are expected to make Florida their home by 2025 – growing the state's total population to about 23 million. It is anticipated that one-third of these new residents will settle in South Florida.
- Floridians statewide consume more than 7.9 billion gallons each day of fresh water, with more than 90 percent of it supplied by underground aquifers.
- As much as 50 percent of all potable water produced in South Florida is used for landscape irrigation.
- Up to 50 percent of the water applied to lawns and landscapes is lost to evaporation and runoff.
- Florida receives an average of 52 inches of rainfall each year, with 70 percent of it falling during the five-month wet season from June through October.
- A lawn with St. Augustine grass needs only 50-60 inches of water a year. Lawns receive up to 7 feet of water per year **more** than they need to stay green and healthy when irrigated for 20-30 minutes, three times per week.
- During the wet season from June through October, most lawns don't need to be watered at all. Lawns may need supplemental irrigation only during the dry season from November through May.

Weather Extremes Prompt the Need for Conservation

Florida's weather is known for its extremes. This is demonstrated in average rainfall totals which can vary significantly between the wet and dry seasons, and from year-to-year. Although South Florida receives an annual rainfall average of 52 inches, these seasonal and annual swings in rainfall make water conservation critically important.

- For example, South Florida received a total of 60.04 inches of rainfall in 2005, but a total of 40.74 inches of rainfall in 2006. Rainfall wasn't much better in 2007, when South Florida received a total of 42.89 inches.
- Rainfall deficits in drier years, as experienced in 2006 and 2007, prompted the declaration of emergency water restrictions for the appropriate management of water resources.
- South Florida continues to be impacted by rainfall deficits, which stretched into 2009.

Water Conservation Produces Household Benefits

Based on current water rates, and in particular where conservation rate structures are in place, year-round conservation measures – including reductions in water for irrigation – may potentially help households reduce monthly water bills and other expenses.

- Utility bills in Florida are already some of the lowest in the nation, averaging $54 per month, with some as low as $25 per month. In comparison, Seattle and San Diego households pay an average of $63 per month, and Houston households pay an average of $140 per month.
- In one year, these savings can offset the cost of water saving parts and equipment that can lower water use even further. For example, an automatic hose shutoff nozzle costs $8 to $12, a timer for a hose-based irrigation system costs $50 to $80, and a drip-irrigation system to water up to 500 square feet of landscaping costs $40 to $60.
- As the demand for electricity to run in-ground irrigation systems is reduced, households are likely to benefit from a reduction in monthly electric bills.
- Reducing water use can also cut other landscape costs related to applying fertilizer and weed and disease control formulas. Excessive watering tends to reduce their effectiveness resulting in additional costly applications.

Water Conservation Also Benefits the Community

Water conservation measures, including reductions in water for irrigation, can have a positive economic impact on communities.

- Water conservation stretches the water resources of communities relying on alternative water supplies to meet their water needs.
- Water conservation is less costly to a community than funding the design and construction of alternative water supply facilities. Alternative water supply projects can range from reclaimed water distribution pipes to large reverse osmosis treatment plants.
- Water conservation can cost as little as 6 cents to 72 cents per 1,000 gallons of water saved, while the cost of constructing alternative water supply facilities can exceed $7 per 1,000 gallons of water created.
- Reduced demand for water may lessen the need for utilities to make costly capital improvements.